

## **Bimonthly Records and Information Discussion Group (BRIDG) Meeting Summary**

**10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., February 21, 2001**

**Room 105, National Archives Building, Washington, DC**

**TOPIC: “Records Management Issues and the Transition to the New Administration.”**

About 80 people attended the February 21, 2001, BRIDG meeting to learn about records management issues affecting the transition to the new Administration. Michael L. Miller, Director of Modern Records Programs, opened the meeting by announcing that the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has received over 40 web site snapshots. He encouraged agencies to complete the snapshot process and then gave an overview of transition issues.

### **Overview of the Transition – Mike Miller**

NARA has been working closely with the Bush Administration and taking a proactive approach towards records management. NARA has been working with the General Services Administration to develop briefing packages and address training issues for new high-level administration appointees. The pamphlet, *Documenting Your Public Service*, is available on NARA’s web site, and hard copies are also available. A handout, *Quick Reference Guide to Records Management on the NARA Web*, highlighted some important web pages that might be useful to high-level agency officials. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about records management are available on the web site, and FAQs about other specific issues are being developed. Agencies should contact NARA if they have additional questions. The Life Cycle Management Division Staff (NWML) can help with briefing and training issues.

### **The Importance of Connecting with the General Counsel – Gary Stern**

Gary Stern, NARA’s General Counsel, emphasized the importance of records officers establishing a connection with their general counsels. General counsels should be brought into records management processes as early as possible. Records officers need to work with general counsels to

- Minimize overall litigation risk
- Efficiently respond to discovery processes and access requests
- Enable the building-in of legal requirements on the front end of electronic and other recordkeeping systems
- Review records schedules (SF 115s) as they are being developed
- Stay up-to-date on counsel’s own recordkeeping requirements

### **Services of the Life Cycle Management Division – Marie Allen and Nina Frederick**

Marie Allen, Director, and Nina Frederick, Life Cycle Management Division, stressed the importance of “selling” records management to both departing and arriving officials. For departing officials, records officers should

- Make contact – be brief and to the point

- Explain why Federal records can't be removed from agency custody
  - It's against the law
  - It's in your interest
  - It's in the public's interest
  - The records will still be available to you
- Provide definitions of Federal records and personal files
  - *Documenting Your Public Service*
  - [www.nara.gov/records/index.html](http://www.nara.gov/records/index.html)
  - agency guidance and handy reference aids
- Provide assistance
  - "It's not hard if you do it right"
  - Provide disposition authorities for use in accurate labeling, packing and storage
  - Provide information about storage, copying and access services
  - Provide advice on security classification issues

For arriving officials, records officers should

- Make early contact – be brief and to the point
- Explain why recordkeeping is important
  - Law and regulation require it
  - It's in your interest
  - It's in the public's interest
  - If you get started right, it's easy!
- Provide assistance
  - Briefings
  - Copies of directives and publications
    - *Documenting Your Public Service*
  - Disposition authorities for use in accurate labeling and filing
  - Storage and copying services
  - Advice on definitions
- Follow-up
  - At annual cut-off and transfer times
  - To provide updates on requirements
  - To assist in file cleanups

Marie and Nina also discussed nine frequently asked questions that new officials are likely to have.

### **Agency Records Officer Suggestions for Reaching High-Level Officials**

Betty Fugitt, Department of Agriculture

- Stress the individual's service and the need to preserve agency history for posterity.
- Prepare and hand-deliver file labels and other records management information.
- Place labels, retention lists, and other tools for support staff on the agency's intranet site.
- Make personal introductions to support staff.

- Establish major filing categories in email and word processing functions as new computers are set up for incoming officials.

#### Chris O'Donnell, Environmental Protection Agency

- Prepare a memo on the disposition of email for departing officials.
- Hold records management briefings for new political appointees.
- Develop a good relationship with the agency's general counsel and bring him/her to briefings.
- Prepare a records management binder with essential information for staff.
- Explain the existing records management system to new administrators.
- Inform top-level officials that they will need to document decisions reached in meetings and telephone conversations.
- Assign records management responsibilities to someone in each department.
- Ask for financial support.

#### Gladys Myatt, Department of the Treasury

- Develop a one-page briefing paper for departing officials.
- Brief departing officials early.
- Review departing officials' requests for copies of records with the General Counsel and start photocopying early.
- Develop a partnership with the General Counsel on various issues.
- Incorporate records management into ethics training and orientations for new employees.

#### **Presidential Records and Personal Papers – Nancy Smith**

Nancy Smith, Office of Presidential Libraries, explained the differences among Federal records, Presidential records, and personal papers. Most records are created by Federal agencies, which are governed by the Federal Records Act. Presidential records are created by the Executive Office of the President and governed by the Presidential Records Act. She noted that many Cabinet-level officials also create personal papers that would nicely complement Presidential records at the Presidential Libraries. Examples of personal papers include

- Documents relating to a person's prior function or occupation
- Documents relating to professional activities outside of the Executive position
- Calendars, diaries, and schedules
- Correspondence with family and friends
- Convenience copies of documents in the record files
- Political materials concerning campaign activities

Transition files of a Presidential-Elect Team are personal papers and should not be merged with an agency's records. Agency records officers should discuss personal papers with their agency head as soon as possible and urge them to file personal papers separately from agency records.

## **Current Recordkeeping and Records Use Within the Federal Government – Lew Bellardo**

Dr. Lewis J. Bellardo, Deputy Archivist of the United States, spoke about the ongoing initiative relating to Current Recordkeeping and Records Use Within the Federal Government. He thanked records officers for their support during the information gathering project. In Phase 1, SRA, NARA's contractor, will use a web survey form, focus groups, and individual interviews to gather data on the views, perceptions, and opinions of agency personnel about recordkeeping in their agencies. Thirty-nine records officers (or their representatives) attended four focus group meetings in December and January. SRA will also interview Chief Information Officers (CIOs), General Counsels (GCs), and Inspector Generals (IGs) and conduct focus group meetings with process workers in approximately 24 agencies. SRA will keep individual responses confidential and prepare a report on the larger issues for Dr. Bellardo. Records officers may contact Dr. Bellardo or Susan Cummings with their questions or comments about the web survey form or other aspects of the contractor data collection. NARA's GC, IG, and CIO are also talking to their counterparts in the agencies to be visited to encourage support for the project.

During Phase 2, Records System Analyses (RSA), NARA teams will survey various work processes and records created by the work processes, with a focus on how technology affects the records being created. NARA tested the RSA methodology at the Washington National Records Center, and at the NARA facilities in the Northeast Region (Boston) and the Pacific Alaska Region (Seattle). The Farm Credit Administration agreed to participate in the pilot. NARA staff from headquarters and the regions received training to ensure consistency in the various RSA projects. Some processes have already been chosen for study, and the RSA groups are currently doing background research. Dr. Bellardo asked for agencies' cooperation and emphasized that the RSA teams would do their work as quickly as possible.

Records officers emphasized that NARA should contact high-level officials about the RSAs and have program offices tasked, instead of establishing contacts through the agency records officers.

## **RACO 2001 and Best Practice Award Nominations – Nina Frederick**

NARA's annual Records Administration Conference (RACO) will be held on May 15, 2001, at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center in Washington, DC. The theme of the conference is, "Transitions and New Technologies for Records Management." Registration information is available on the NARA web site at <http://www.nara.gov/records/racofl.html>. During the luncheon, NARA will recognize individuals who are retiring, just starting their records management careers or transferring from one agency to another. Records officers are requested to send names and brief records management career descriptions of such individuals to Nina Frederick.

One of the most popular RACO sessions is the presentation of awards for Best Practices in Records Management. Records officers may nominate their own agency or other agencies for a Best Practice award in one of the following categories: (1) records inventorying and scheduling, (2) records management training and promotion, (3) managing electronic records, (4) innovative uses of technology in records management, or (5) overall excellence in a records management

program. Nomination forms are available on the NARA web site and should be returned to Nina Frederick by April 1.

### **Updates on Other NARA Initiatives and Activities – Mike Miller**

- Due to renovation at the National Archives Building, NARA needs a place to hold the April BRIDG meeting. (FEMA has offered a conference room for the next BRIDG meeting on April 25, 2001.) The June BRIDG meeting will be held at the National Archives Building on June 26, 2001, but NARA will need another space for future meetings because of renovation activities. Records officers are requested to contact Mike Miller if their agency may be able to provide space for future BRIDG meetings.
- Web snapshot information is available on the NARA web site at <http://www.nara.gov/records/websnapshot.html>. NARA will invite a few agencies to attend a focus group on web guidance development on March 9.
- An announcement was made about a planned March 28 presentation co-sponsored by the Federal Information and Records Management Council (FIRM) and NARA on Australia's electronic records program. The presentation and meeting have been cancelled.
- The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual National Archives and Records Administration Preservation Conference will be held on March 27 at the National Archives at College Park, Maryland. The theme of the conference is, "2001, A Case Oddity: Preserving the Physical Evidence of Artifacts and Records." For additional information, contact Eleanor Torain at 301-713-6718.
- Thanks to Susan Sallaway and Nancy Allard, several new FAQs have been posted on the web. The next area of focus is Frequently Asked Questions on Optical Media and Imaging. Records officers are encouraged to send questions that NARA should develop a position on to [records.mgt@nara.gov](mailto:records.mgt@nara.gov).